

NOAA Fisheries Funds Grass-Roots Approaches for Salmon Habitat Restoration

Through a special program of the NOAA Restoration Center, biologists from the NOAA Fisheries La Grande Field Office have the opportunity to help build partnerships that benefit salmon and assist in watershed restoration. Recognizing the integral role of local citizens in conserving threatened and endangered species, the Restoration Center developed the Community-based Restoration Program (CRP). The goal of this program is to facilitate partnerships that will help citizens carry out restoration projects in their watersheds. Since its inception in 1996, the CRP has funded nearly 700 projects nation wide. In the year 2002 the CRP provided 1.5 million dollars to support on the ground restoration projects in Oregon.

Living several hundred miles from the Pacific Ocean, residents may wonder what a program such as the CRP that serves marine species and their environments would have to do with them. As anglers from around the state know, rivers and creeks within the Grande Ronde Basin house anadromous salmon and steelhead. These fish spawn and rear in fresh water systems, but spend a large portion of their life in marine environments. Bodies of fresh water such as the Grande Ronde and Snake Rivers are as important to anadromous fish as the estuaries and tidal flats commonly associated with the



A group of students with Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (California), a supporter of the restoration at Adobe Creek. Photo Credit: NOAA Restoration Center

term marine environments. Consequently, groups living in areas such as the Grande Ronde Basin are eligible to apply for NOAA Restoration Grants to implement projects that benefit salmon and steelhead.

The Adobe Creek Fish Ladder Project is an inspirational example of the type of project that was implemented with the aid of funds available through the CRP. Ten years ago an organization of high school students now known as the United Anglers of Casa Grande in Petuluma, California, identified a stretch of Adobe Creek in their community that had once been inhabited by a robust population of steelhead but had been severely degraded by human influences. The students catalyzed local, state and federal entities to work with them to build a permanent step-pool fish ladder system to provide fish passage over a 12-foot obstruction in Adobe Creek that would allow steelhead to return to their historic spawning grounds. In addition, the United Anglers planted native vegetation, built a fish



**Volunteers plant native vegetation along the banks of Adobe Creek.
Photo Credit: NOAA Restoration Center**

hatchery to preserve the native steelhead stock, removed large amounts of trash from the area, and continue to maintain both the fish ladder and hatchery.

The CRP supports projects in two ways: directly, and through national and regional partnerships. The direct solicitation, which will be open this fall, will fund individual projects ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000. Through partnerships with organizations such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and the Pacific Salmon Watershed Fund,

projects ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000 are solicited at various times throughout the year. Projects must be on-the-ground, and should provide a 1:1 non-federal match, either cash or in-kind. Projects are evaluated on their technical merit, level of community involvement, and the benefits they provide for marine or anadromous fish habitat. Staff from the NOAA Fisheries La Grande Field Office are able to offer technical advice and assist in the early planning stages of restoration projects. Biologists at the La Grande Field Office can be reached at (541) 975-1835. CRP programs and application dates can be tracked on the Restoration Center's website at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/>. For additional information about the CRP in Oregon, please contact Megan Callahan Grant, Marine Habitat Resource Specialist, at (503) 231-2213.